

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-12 /094 W
-----087066 061904Z /50
R 061804Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4297
INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 0149

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PGOV PINT AO PO
SUBJECT: TWO SOCIALIST VIEWS ON RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA

REF: 77 LISBON 9563

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO PS INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY RUI MATEUS, SENEGAL PRESIDENT SENGHOR IS INTERESTED IN BRINGING ANGOLAN PRESIDENT NETO AND UNITA LEADER SAVIMBI TOGETHER IN AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE MPLA AND UNITA. MATEUS APPEARS ANXIOUS TO HELP.
END SUMMARY.

1. TIME FOR DECISION FOR NETO: PS INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY RUI MATEUS, WHO JUST RETURNED FROM ATTENDING THE SENEGALESE SOCIALIST PARTY CONGRESS, DISCUSSED ANGOLA WITH POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON JAN 5. MATEUS SAID HE HAD EXCHANGED VIEWS ON ANGOLA WITH PRESIDENT SENGHOR. BOTH HE AND SENGHOR AGREED THAT AN EFFORT AT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE MPLA AND UNITA WAS ESSENTIAL AT THIS JUNCTURE. SENGHOR EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN BRINGING SAVIMBI AND NETO, OR THEIR PROXIES, TOGETHER FOR "SECRET CONVERSATIONS." MATEUS EMPHASIZED THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR NETO TO MAKE HARD DECISIONS ABOUT ABOUT THE
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FUTURE OF HIS COUNTRY. NETO'S TIME FOR LOFTY RHETORIC DURING FISHING EXCURSIONS WITH FORMER OPPOSITION ASSOCIATES LIKE MANUEL ALEGRE HAD ENDED. IF THE STEADY MARCH TOWARD DOMINATION BY MOSCOW WAS TO BE HALTED, THE PROCESS OF REVERSAL MUST BEGIN NOW.

2. ALEGRE PAINTS BLEAK PICTURE: IN AN EARLIER CONVERSATION

WITH THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR, PS SECRETARIAT MEMBER MANUEL ALEGRE DESCRIBED THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ANGOLA AS GRIM. AMPLIFYING COMMENTS MADE TO THE AMBASSADOR ON DEC 15 BY PRIME MINISTER SOARES (REFTEL), ALEGRE REITERATED THAT PRESIDENT NETO WAS A VIRTUAL PRISONER IN HIS OWN CAPITAL. THE PRO-SOCIALIST MODERATE FACTION WITHIN THE MPLA HAD BEEN DEALT A SEVERE SETBACK AT THE RECENT PARTY CONGRESS IN LUANDA. THE CONGRESS WAS ORCHESTRATED BY THE SOVIETS DOWN TO THE FINAL DETAIL. THE RESULT WAS A PREDICTABLE PRO-MOSCOW CHARADE. ALEGRE SAID HE WOULD PROVIDE US WITH A COPY OF THE DOCUMENT CONTAINING THE CONCLUSIONS APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS.

3. CAN THE CUBANS BE REPLACED? ALEGRE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH ALGERIAN AND YUGOSLAV REPRESENTATIVES IN LUANDA THE POSSIBILITY OF DOING SOMETHING TO SOFTEN THE PRESENCE OF THE CUBANS IN ANGOLA. THE MOST OBVIOUS WAY TO DO THIS, ALEGRE THOUGHT, WOULD BE TO PROVIDE THE ANGOLANS WITH ALTERNATE SOURCES OF MILITARY ADVICE AND EQUIPMENT. NETO HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE A SERIES OF REQUESTS TO THE PORTUGUESE TO PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE. THE PORTUGUESE HAD BEEN SLOW TO RESPOND. ALEGRE OPINED THAT A COORDINATED EFFORT BY THE PORTUGUESE, ALGERIANS, AND YUGOSLAVS MIGHT MAKE SOME HEADWAY TOWARD DISLODGING THE CUBAN MILITARY MONOLITH. THE CUBANS, ALEGRE SAID, WERE HATED BY MOST ANGOLANS. MPLA OFFICIALS SPOKE OPENLY
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OF A "THIRD LIBERATION STRUGGLE" AGAINST THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS. HOWEVER, THEY APPEARED TO BE FIRMLY ENTRENCHED.

4. COMMENT: MATEUS HAD LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR AID TO NETO UNLESS NETO GAVE SOME CLEAR PUBLIC SIGNAL OF HIS WILLINGNESS TO LESSEN HIS DEPENDENCE ON THE CUBANS AND SOVIETS. AT THIS POINT, THE POSSIBILITY OF A SENEGALESE INITIATIVE TO BRING SAVIMBI AND NETO TOGETHER APPEARS TO BE STILL VERY MUCH IN THE IDEA STAGE. WE DOUBT THAT IT WILL PROSPER, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF NETO'S KNOWN INTRANSIGENCE REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH UNITA. MATEUS, HOWEVER, APPEARS ANXIOUS TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED IN PORTUGUESE-ANGOLAN RELATIONS, AND WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO ANY ADVICE WE MIGHT HAVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LISBON00149
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780010-1323
Format: TEL
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780192/aaaaczvk.tel
Line Count: 110
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 479701e6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 LISBON 9563
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3818812
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TWO SOCIALIST VIEWS ON RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, AO, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/479701e6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014